

Experiences of English Major Students in Reading Literary Texts

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Abstract

This qualitative case study examines the experiences of English learners in reading literary texts, focusing on their performance, challenges, and the strategies they employ to overcome these challenges. It includes insights from in-depth interviews with English students and teachers. Using the Merriam Case Study Model and triangulation, the researchers found that students face challenges, including difficulties with comprehension and interpreting figurative language. They employ strategies such as utilizing online resources and engaging in peer discussions to overcome challenges. The study underscores the significant impact of teacher influence on students' literary preferences, contributing to our understanding of the complexities in students' literary experiences and the need for tailored instructional approaches.

Keywords: English, literature, comprehension,

I. INTRODUCTION

Literary texts are written works of artistic or intellectual value, encompassing genres such as fiction, poetry, drama, and essays. They explore human experiences and promote empathy, open-mindedness, and cultural understanding. Literature enables readers to connect with diverse perspectives and historical contexts. In classrooms, reading literary texts contributes to students' growth and development (Delos Reyes, 2023). Teaching literary texts educates students, promotes critical awareness, and exposes them to diverse languages and cultures. It trains students to read, analyse, and understand literary issues while encouraging personal growth and development (Stan, 2015). Literature plays a significant role in language learning, yet instructors often encounter challenges in teaching it effectively (Babaee et al., 2014). Teachers must employ various strategies to help students who face obstacles such as a lack of motivation, interest, and vocabulary, as well as difficulties with the complexity of literary works. A study in Vietnam highlights that students struggle with learning literature due to these factors and suggests solutions, such as assessing students' abilities at the start of the school year, using positive teaching methods, and enhancing engagement through peer teaching and interactive lessons (Tran et al., 2020). Global studies indicate a high status of literature integration in curricula. In the USA and Canada, literature is recognised at the state level despite the absence of a National Curriculum. Australia is developing a National Curriculum with English as a key subject, while New Zealand's curriculum, revised since 2010, places a strong emphasis on literature. Though not universally part of the curriculum, these countries demonstrate effective strategies for teaching literature (Goodwyn, 2012).

The study, "Producing Global Malaysian Secondary Students through Foreign Novels: Perspectives," examines the perspectives of Malaysian teachers and students on incorporating foreign novels into education. The researchers argue that literature can enhance awareness and intercultural competence among Malaysian students and teachers (Zhou & Aziz, 2020). However, they express concerns that including foreign literature may

overshadow local or national Malaysian literature and culture. Therefore, they recommend a thoughtful and balanced approach to integrating foreign and local literature into the curriculum. In the Philippines, there are few studies that explore the impact of literature on students' learning and development. However, a study on the reading abilities of Filipino students (Idulog et al., 2013) indicates that many face challenges with basic reading skills, which negatively affect their academic performance. This issue relates to the reading of literary texts, as research suggests that learning a language is most effectively achieved through the study of literature. Literature helps students expand their vocabulary and deepen their understanding of the language (Siraji & Paraja, 2023). Contributing factors to poor reading skills include a lack of access to high-quality reading materials, insufficient time dedicated to reading instruction, and limited teacher training in effective reading pedagogies.

The Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines has implemented various reading programs in schools to improve students' reading comprehension and promote the value of reading. Despite these initiatives, the results from the National Achievement Tests (NAT) and the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) indicate that students continue to struggle with reading comprehension and generally perform poorly in this area (Pacia, 2022). Research has shown that Grade 9 students display weaknesses in evaluation, comprehension, and interpretation when reading texts (Baltazar, 2017). Idulog et al. (2023) discussed recommendations for improving students' reading skills. These suggestions include increasing investment in school libraries and reading resources, implementing structured reading programs focused on skill development, providing more professional development for teachers on effective reading instruction, and promoting a culture of reading in schools and at home. This is particularly relevant in certain areas and schools in the Philippines, where there is limited research on the status of educational literature and its effects and effectiveness in teaching and learning the English language for students.

The study aimed to understand how students perceive the literary texts they read, their experiences with those texts, how they interpret them, the difficulties they encounter while reading, and how they cope with them. This approach is related to the reader response method, which provides students with the opportunity to interpret the text from their own perspectives, considering their cultural background, experiences, and opinions (Kunjanman & Aziz, 2021). This study examined the experiences of Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) students majoring in English as they read literary texts. The primary question addressed was: How do English Major students describe their experiences in reading literary texts?

Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following sub-questions:

1. How do English major students describe their performance in reading literary texts?
2. What literary texts do English major students engage with?
3. What difficulties do English major students encounter while reading literary texts?
4. How do English major students address the challenges of reading literary texts?
5. What significant benefits do English major students gain from reading literary texts?

The importance of this study is underscored by its potential to yield profound insights into the reading experiences of English Major students. By examining these experiences, the research aims to enrich the existing literature in the field of education, particularly regarding how English Major students engage with literary texts. The anticipated findings promise to illuminate both the challenges and strengths encountered by students, thereby informing and enhancing curriculum design. This research serves not only as a vital tool for schools to assess the effectiveness of their current teaching strategies but also strives to foster essential skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, and analytical ability, among students. Additionally, it lays the groundwork for future inquiries within the realms of education and literature in the Philippines. Ultimately, this study aims to make a significant contribution to the broader discourse in literature, education, and pedagogy, thereby enhancing understanding and driving innovation in teaching and learning.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the experiences of third-year Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) students majoring in English. Utilizing a case study method, as described by Merriam (1988), the research aimed to examine the significance of their perspectives during literary classes. Conducted at a private institution in Pagadian City, the study focused on students enrolled in subjects such as Mythology and Folklore, as well as Contemporary Literature.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling and included third-year BSED English students and their instructors, all of whom met specific criteria related to their enrollment and experience in literature classes. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews and surveys with open-ended questions, ensuring the collection of reliable and valid responses.

Ethical standards were maintained through formal consent from the Office of the Dean and informed consent from participants. The Merriam Case Study Model guided data analysis, which included transcription, coding for key themes, and triangulation to validate results through multiple data sources.

III. RESULTS

The study is centred on the students' experiences of reading literary texts. The researchers conducted interviews with students, and based on their responses, we developed the categories and subcategories for the study. The researchers employed the triangulation method to enhance the data collection process by incorporating the responses of their instructors. The study describes the students' experiences reading literary texts, resulting in categories relating to five main themes: Performance in Reading Literary Texts, Literary Texts Students Engage With, Difficulties in Reading Literary Texts, Strategies for Dealing with Difficulties in Reading Literary Texts, and Benefits of Reading Literary Texts.

Performance in Reading Literary Texts

Reading literary texts is one of the requirements of students enrolled in literary classes as they learn about different types of literature. Students can assess their performance in reading literary texts based on their knowledge of the standard. Performance in reading literary texts is categorized into three sub-categories: Average Reading Performance, Fluent Reading Capability, and Varied Reading Engagement.

Average Reading Performance. When it comes to reading literary texts, the average reading performance is how the participants rate their performance in reading

literary texts. This implies that the participants have a fair to moderate level of performance in reading literary texts, which involves recognizing the author's point of view, interpreting the text, determining the tone, mood, and style, and identifying the elements used in the text. This data is evident in the following responses:

[I can describe my performance in reading literary texts, ma'am, as just average, because I rarely read literary texts.]- P1

"...kanang average kay dili ko dali maka sabot og mga words na unfamiliar sa akoo." [...that is average because I can not easily understand words that are unfamiliar to me.] - P4

[I think I can rate myself as average, maybe my performance is just average.] - P7

"I can describe my performance as something in the middle of good and very good, or satisfactory, only, average." - P8

"I cannot say that it is excellent, but more on average performance because I know my shortcomings, I still have vocabulary difficulties when it comes to reading literary texts." - P13

"I can describe my performance in reading literary text as not too good because there are times that I encounter challenges and difficulties while reading any literary text." - P14

Reading literary texts varies based on how well students understand themes, characters, and the author's intentions. Participants rated their performance as average. P1 noted that reading frequency affects understanding,

while P4 and P13 mentioned that difficulties in comprehension influenced their performance ratings. P9 pointed out that vocabulary impacts reading performance, making some texts easier or more difficult to read.

These insights highlight the challenges of reading literary texts and the need for motivation to engage fully with the material. The findings indicate that regular reading enhances comprehension (Hossain, 2024), but complex language and abstract themes can impede understanding. Overall, the study confirms previous research that university students struggle with reading literary texts (Magulod, 2018).

Fluent Reading Capability. Some of the participants mentioned that they are fluent in reading. This indicates that they can accurately identify and pronounce words, possess a solid understanding of phonics and vocabulary, and exhibit generally strong comprehension in reading literary texts.

[I can describe myself as fluent in reading literary texts. In terms of words, I can understand words even though some are difficult, and I can still pronounce words correctly.] - P5

When reading literary texts, some students prefer to read aloud to better understand the text, and P5 emphasizes the importance of fluency in reading literary texts. This highlights the significance of oral reading in comprehension as students read aloud to understand literary texts. Studies show that oral reading can enhance comprehension by allowing students to hear what they read (Sacaes et al., 2023). Furthermore, fluency is important for comprehension because it enables students to understand the overall meaning of the text, rather than every word in it. However, it is also important to note that reading aloud is not the most effective way for all students to comprehend texts. Some students prefer to read silently and can still comprehend the text.

Varied Reading Engagement. The performance of some participants varies depending on their familiarity with the text. The participants' performance varies depending on whether the texts relate to their experience and background knowledge. This is evident in the following responses:

[Sometimes, I have a hard time because of unfamiliar words; it seems like I do not really understand them because they are new to me, and sometimes it is really enjoyable to read literary texts, especially when you understand the story.] - P2

[Sometimes it is understandable, but sometimes it is difficult for us to interpret.] -P3

[It depends on the literary text, so if the words in the literary text are easy, I can easily understand the themes, like that, but if it is difficult, like those ancient literary texts, the words used are also difficult, so it is also difficult for me to understand their themes and interpretations.] - P9

[Depending on how relatable it is, for example, about real life, and about society, then you can easily identify it.] -P10

Participants noted that students' performance in interpreting literary texts depends on the text's complexity, particularly in terms of vocabulary and cultural background. P2, P3, and P9 indicated that comprehension improves when words are easier to understand, supporting research by Sidek & Rahim (2015) on vocabulary's role in reading comprehension. P10 emphasized that students' cultural and historical contexts also affect their engagement with texts. Overall, the findings reveal that students' ability to interpret literary texts is influenced by the ease or difficulty of understanding the material.

Reader Response theory highlights how a reader's background, experiences, and perspective influence their interpretation of literary texts (Kunjanman & Aziz, 2021). This theory empowers students to take charge of their learning and use their prior knowledge to derive meaning from texts. The findings suggest practical implications for BSED English major students, emphasizing the need to develop vocabulary and regularly practice reading varied literary texts. This will not only enhance their understanding but also help them teach effectively. Additionally, teachers can support students by providing strategies for vocabulary development and literary analysis, thereby fostering a greater appreciation for reading.

Literary Texts Students Engage in Reading

A part of the students' experience reading literary texts is the types of literary texts they read. This could be their interest or the texts they are required to read in school. The type of text they read affects their motivation to explore and understand the literature. The literary texts students read are categorized into the following sub-genres: Short Stories, Mythology, History, Romantic Stories, Mystery, Comedy, and Autobiography.

Short Stories. It is a short work of fiction, shorter than a novel, with only a few characters. It typically conveys a single idea in one or a few significant parts of the literary text (Hansen, 2025). Many participants expressed an interest in reading literary texts. This is evident in the following responses:

[Short stories because they are short] - P1

"I usually read short stories" - P5

[To be honest, short stories are an eye-opener because of the interesting plot twists. Some factors include interest and your eagerness to read literary texts because if you do not have interest, you do not want to read, and it also depends on the title if it is catchy.] - P8

Short stories are valued for their brevity and simple plot structure, making them ideal for classroom instruction. Many students, as noted by P1 and P5, prefer short stories because they are concise and easy to read. This allows readers to immerse themselves without feeling overwhelmed. Research supports this, indicating that short stories can be read in one sitting (Ali et al., 2023). P8 points out the appeal of interesting plot twists and catchy titles. Furthermore, students' preferences align with their instructor's observations, who noted that students engage more with shorter texts. Longer literary texts often diminish students' motivation and interest in reading.

Mythology. These are stories collected by people that usually explain the world around them, how they came to be, their cultures, traditions, and other aspects of life that explain their beliefs. Some students read this type of literary text as required in class, while others do so because of their own interests. This is evident in the following responses:

"I usually read short stories and myths" - P5

[...since we had mythology and folklore last semester, I prefer to read about myths. Since we had mythology and folklore last semester, there were mostly myths there. I prefer to read about myths in literary texts.] - P7

[...it depends on my mood. It could be a short story, myth, or folktale, or a novel.] - P8

BSED English students are required to take Mythology and Folklore, and their engagement with these texts is notable. P7's response indicates that students' literary choices influence what teachers incorporate in class, while P8 notes that mood affects those preferences. This suggests that teachers play a significant role in shaping students' literary interests, particularly by incorporating mythology and folklore into the curriculum. Supporting this, research suggests that teachers should facilitate activities that enhance student engagement with texts (Pedler et al., 2020).

Additionally, history, which studies past events and their sources (Luebering, 2025), appeals to many students. For instance, P10 expresses a desire to understand the history behind stories, which aids in critique and analysis. This focus on nonfiction, especially history, helps develop analytical skills and enhances appreciation of texts by revealing authors' intentions and themes.

Romantic Stories. In literary form, it typically discusses or presents various ideas, such as love, chivalry, adventure, and many more. It also focuses on quests that involve values and not just love. Many students are engaged in reading romance novels or stories because of their relevance to the students and emotional appeal. This is evident in the following responses:

[I like the romance genre because it is really good, usually the ones that are read now, ma'am, because you can also bring it to the current generation, so they also read it, so it seems like it will pique your interest, so I can read it too.] - P1

[I like stories, but they are all romance. I can see my cousins reading them, they are having so much fun, like they have learned so much vocabulary, that is why I like them too.] - P3

"I like the romance genre because if I read romance, I can learn something, and I can apply something by reading that kind of genre. The factors that influenced my choice of that genre may be because it is engaging and entertaining." - P5

"I usually find myself engaged in a romance like romance and fictional literary pieces because it is interesting and it is aligned with my preference" - P14

Romance is a popular genre among teens and young adults, appealing to them through themes of love, chivalry, and adventure. Student preferences for literary texts are influenced by their generation, with many choosing romance for its relatability and entertainment value. Studies indicate that reading romance helps develop vocabulary and allows readers to learn life lessons applicable to real-world situations. Many teenagers are drawn to romance novels because they resonate with their experiences and interests, making the genre particularly engaging for them.

Mystery. A genre of literature that focuses on crime, situations, or circumstances that need to be solved. This can be either fictional or non-fictional and may include both supernatural and non-supernatural phenomena. This type of genre typically concludes with solving the puzzle of the literary text, which satisfies readers, and some participants prefer to read this genre. This is evident in the response of P6, saying:

"I think the genre I prefer to read is a mystery because it is thrilling and because of the suspense." - P6

This suggests that students prefer to read mystery novels due to the unique blend of thrill and suspense that they offer.

Comedy. It is a type of drama or other literary text designed to amuse readers, and because of its humor, many people enjoy reading this type of literary text, as do the participants themselves. This is evident in the following response:

[I guess it is comedy because I am not into horror because it is very scary, and romance too is not suitable because we are not old enough to read romantic text, so it should be comedy because it is right for us teenagers] - P11

Comedy is very popular among readers of all ages due to its entertaining and humorous content, which sparks their interest and engagement. P11 pointed out that the reader's preference is also influenced by their age, whether they are at the proper age to read explicit content. This is supported by studies indicating that readers' preferences evolve as they age (Vlachos, 2015). P11 also emphasises that comedy is the proper literary text that students in this age group must read.

Autobiography. It is a text made and narrated by the author of their biography. It contains different ideas, experiences, and many things that the author has written. This includes diaries, journals, and other records that contain most of the author's life. This is evident in the following response:

[...maybe it is those autobiographies because they are personal, if you read them, you will feel like you can relate to them or feel like they are his experience, you can empathize with them or something, especially if you have a personal experience, you will feel like the emotion is really, like, the emotion is really heavy or something.] - P12

Autobiographies possess unique characteristics that reveal the author's personal life, highlighting genuine experiences. Readers find them relatable, making for an engaging read as they reflect on the author's thoughts and feelings.

Reader-response theory suggests that the meaning derived from a text depends on the reader, influenced by factors such as text type, motivation, and teacher guidance. For instance, students showed a preference for short stories due to their conciseness and simple plot structures. Teachers play a crucial role in selecting texts that resonate with students, thereby influencing their motivation to read. The findings indicate that educators should consider students' interests and preferences when teaching literary texts, suggesting that curricula should accommodate diverse interests and learning styles.

Difficulties in Reading Literary Texts

Reading literary texts is challenging in the Philippines, with studies indicating that Filipinos often struggle with poor performance in this area. This issue arises from various factors affecting students, including limited vocabulary, difficulties with interpretation, low confidence, challenges with cultural literacy, and difficulties understanding figurative language.

Limited Vocabulary. It is when a person has a vocabulary that is smaller than average that one can understand and use. Responses from the participants indicate that students struggle with unfamiliar or complex words, which hinder their comprehension, and they also find their limited vocabulary to be a barrier to understanding texts. This is evident in the following responses:

[So some of the difficulties, ma'am, while reading literary texts are because there are some words that are difficult to understand, and there are some words that are very deep, so I have a hard time understanding them sometimes.] - P1

[The difficulties that I encountered are that I can encounter English words with deep meanings that is unfamiliar to me, which is why I find it hard to interpret texts, and that is why I get confused about the point of the story.] - P3

"Some of the difficulties are that there are some deep words, there are some difficult words." - P5

[The first is the comprehension of the text; there are some words that are new.] - P7

[...There are some examples of English poems, but the English is very deep, so it made it difficult to understand those texts.] - P11

"...vocabulary difficulties because I have encountered a lot of unfamiliar words. There are some words that aren't familiar to me because I know I still lack vocabulary, I still need to learn more, and that's why unfamiliar words are very dominant in literature because there are many authors that have different writing styles." - P13

"Some of the difficulties that I have encountered in reading literary text are the vocabulary that is being used in that literary text" - P14

[There was a time when I was reading that literary text, especially on the subject of this topic, that I almost went crazy interpreting it. No matter how I reread it, I still couldn't understand it because of the fact that it used very deep terms.] - P15

Vocabulary plays a crucial role in reading and writing literary texts. Many students struggle with unfamiliar words and meanings, as highlighted by participants. P3 notes that this can confuse students about the plot, while P13 points out that a lack of vocabulary hinders comprehension. Even after multiple readings, as P15 mentions, unfamiliar words persist, leading to difficulties in understanding. Consequently, students may lose motivation and engagement with the text, underscoring the importance of vocabulary knowledge for reading comprehension (Sidek & Rahim, 2015).

Interpretation Problems. This is a problem for the readers when they struggle to understand the author's intended meaning, leading to misinterpretation and a lack of engagement with the work. Responses from the participants indicate that students find it challenging to interpret the meanings of literary texts and often experience self-doubt in their interpretations. This is evident in the following responses:

[...sometimes, I doubt in interpreting.] - P1

[Sometimes, I cannot understand what the main thought of it.] - P5

[In the plot, in the plot of the story, sometimes it's like 'oh, so this is what happened.' Your interpretation is different, but the plot twist can make you say 'wow, so this is how wonderful the story is' because you did not understand at first because of the twists.] - P8

[The interpretation of the thought of the piece is very hard because sometimes in literature, there are metaphors and there are deep meanings, like what is this, is this literal meaning, or does this have meanings, that is why I get confused, like I do not know] - P12

"Somewhat I'm hesitant about interpreting a literary text since I'm not that well informed about those themes or elements that are in the literary piece, and there are a lot of things that I still need to enhance for me to comprehend or analyse better a literary text." - P14

Interpreting a text relies heavily on students' comprehension of its themes, messages, and literary devices. Many students struggle with interpretation due to uncertainty and a fear of misreading the text, often stemming from a lack of understanding. Research indicates that prior knowledge has a significant impact on interpretation (Smith et al., 2021). Additionally, P8 notes that plot twists can lead students to diverge from the author's intended message, emphasizing the need for recognizing multiple interpretations. Butterfuss et al. (2020) support this by highlighting that readers construct meaning through their interaction with the text. Observations from English instructors illustrate that students frequently arrive at different themes. P12 mentions that metaphors and hidden meanings can further confuse students, while P14 notes that limited knowledge of literary elements complicates accurate interpretation. Overall, interpreting a text is a complex process influenced by various contextual factors and literary devices.

Low Confidence. When students read and interpret literary texts, they sometimes lack confidence in their interpretations. This can be due to a fear of misinterpretation, where students may be concerned about making mistakes. Some responses show low confidence as they interpret and share their interpretations with others. This is evident in the following responses:

[...especially when I do not understand the literary text, I am not confident in sharing with others because my interpretation might be wrong, and we would not understand each other.]
- P3

[I am not confident if I do not understand the literature, so yes, I do not participate if I do not understand. Yes, I get shy.] - P9

Confidence plays a crucial role in students' ability to read and understand literary texts. However, many students express low confidence due to fear of making mistakes, as noted by P3, which hinders their participation (Salihoğlu, 2024). P9 adds that not fully understanding the text diminishes their confidence. This contrasts with their instructor's view, who believes that students exhibit confidence through their interpretations, even if they are limited. This suggests that while students may feel insecure about their interpretations, teachers can recognize their understanding, indicating that students do possess some confidence in the eyes of their instructors.

Cultural Literacy Difficulties. It is a challenge for the reader when they lack the necessary background knowledge to fully understand the meanings and complexities of the literary text. Some responses indicate difficulty in understanding cultural backgrounds beyond their own when reading literary texts. This is evident in the following responses:

[...especially if it is not relatable, the cultural aspect, the same with me, that I have a different tradition, and what I read also has a different context, so I find it hard to understand.] - P2

[If it is in the Philippines, then it is understandable, but if it is from another, then I find it difficult.] - P3

[...there are also difficulties in understanding the culture of the story because we have different cultures around the world, and it makes me question, 'why is there culture like that?' That is how they treat other people, but for us, it is forbidden."] - P8

Literary texts offer diverse perspectives shaped by historical and cultural contexts. Understanding these contexts is crucial since texts are created by authors from varying backgrounds, which may be unfamiliar to some students, making comprehension challenging. For instance, P2 and P3 struggle to relate their culture to the texts they read. Research indicates that students' cultural backgrounds significantly affect their interpretation, and greater cultural knowledge leads to better understanding (Lu, 2018). P8 highlights that exploring literature from different cultures

prompts reflection on their own practices. Additionally, engaging with diverse literary texts can enhance cultural competence and critical thinking skills (Simel, 2024).

Figurative Language Interpretation. There are many types of figurative language, and authors usually use many of them to make the text more creative, provide imagery, and convey deeper meanings. This type of difficulty arises when students struggle to understand the literary devices used in the texts, making it difficult for them to understand the whole literary piece. This is evident in the following responses:

"The difficulties are unfamiliar words and many figurative language used in literary texts." - P6

[Maybe it is hard to identify the literary devices because sometimes it is remembered more in the memory, it is not for the long term, so it can be forgotten, and I forget, so I find it difficult to identify] - P10

"...literary devices, like it is difficult for me because some of them are not familiar to me or maybe I forgot what it's all about, that's why it is hard for me to identify or analyse in that specific literary text." - p14

Figurative language is prevalent in literary texts, but many students struggle to identify it. P10 and P14 note that while students recognize some literary devices, these are often forgotten, as their retention is typically short-term. Research indicates that a deep understanding of figurative language is essential for text comprehension (Wiejak, 2014).

The findings align with reader-response theory, which suggests that comprehension is influenced by a reader's interaction, background, and vocabulary. Students with limited vocabulary may struggle to derive meaning, and doubts about their interpretations can hinder understanding. Cultural and historical contexts also affect how texts are interpreted.

To address these challenges, teachers can support students by providing differentiated instruction tailored to their unique needs, especially those with limited vocabulary or varying cultural backgrounds. Encouraging reading and incorporating activities that build reading habits are also vital. Policymakers should develop comprehensive literacy programs that enhance students' reading skills and comprehension.

Strategies for Dealing with Difficulties in Reading Literary Texts

This category discusses the strategies used by participants to deal with the difficulties they encounter in reading literary texts, including Using Online Resources, discussing with Peers, Repeated Reading, Annotating and Highlighting, and Reading Practice.

Using Online Resources. It is the practice of utilizing digital materials, tools, and platforms to access information from around the world. When students struggle to understand something or want to learn more, they often turn to the internet for information. This is evident in the following responses:

[I will deal with it through, I will search it because that is the most common thing to do, so that it can be understood.] - P1

[Of course, for example, I can see that something, I will search it through Google or a dictionary so that I can understand what those words mean.] - P2

"Sometimes if I don't understand, then I browse on Google to further enlighten me, and it is effective since it's easier to understand." - P5

[...so when you read, you would not quickly understand, so you need to search on Google, and then there you will understand it.] - P9

"I usually do searching or use a dictionary, especially when the words are unfamiliar to me." - P14

Online resources are easily accessible, allowing students to quickly find information with just one click. When faced with difficulties, students often turn to digital tools like Google to search for meanings, especially in literary texts.

Research shows that these resources help students gain confidence in their interpretations by providing quick access to correct meanings related to themes, symbols, and figurative language.

Discussing with Peers. It is the exchange of ideas between students as they read literary texts. When students struggle to understand something in the literary text they read, they discuss it with other students, exchange ideas, and compare their interpretations. This is evident in the following responses:

[...sometimes, I ask my friends about what is being portrayed in the text.] - P1

[I will ask my peers for help because if I were on my own, I would have a hard time, and if I ask them questions, they will give me better explanations, so I will understand better.] - P2

[I ask my friends for help, like what is their interpretation, then I read it again to see if that is their interpretation. It is mostly with peers, but with teachers, I hesitate because they might be worried about having questions.] - P4

[If there are words that I do not understand, I ask for help from my classmate about the meaning of that word and why that is.] - P6

[...always with the classmate because we chat and say 'oh, have you read about that, and what was your interpretation' then I say mine too and find out that they are different, so we combine the interpretations, then boom, that is the result.] P8

The responses underscore the significance of peer support when students encounter challenges in reading literary texts. Students often seek help to understand challenging passages and compare their interpretations with those of their peers. This collaboration enhances their confidence, especially when they find shared insights, which aligns with research showing that peer support fosters a sense of belonging and boosts motivation (Dost & Mazolli Smith, 2023). An instructor also noted that discussing difficulties with classmates helps students create more meaningful interpretations of texts. While teachers play a role in assisting students, many are hesitant to seek help from them.

Repeated Reading. It is a reading strategy that involves rereading the text multiple times to gain more understanding and comprehension. One of the strategies that students use is repeated reading, especially if they fail to understand the text the first time they read it. This is evident in the following responses:

"For me, I deal with it by reading repeatedly, by reading it comprehensively." - P6

[I am the type of person who, when I read it for the first time, I do not understand, so I must read and read and read and read until I can understand.] - P8

The responses from P6 and P8 emphasise the importance of reading repeatedly to improve their comprehension. This suggests that students can understand the text more effectively if they read it repeatedly, as it enhances their recognition of words, phrases, and sentences, leading to improved reading fluency. This strategy deals with the students' difficulty in interpreting and understanding the texts they read. Studies show that repeated reading can develop the students' vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension skills (Soleimani, 2022).

Annotating and Highlighting. These essential reading strategies help students engage with the text, interact with the text, and record their insights. Annotating involves writing notes and comments regarding the texts. Highlighting involves marking the text being read using a highlighter or by underlining. Some students deal with their difficulty by annotating and highlighting the texts. This is evident in the following response:

[The strategies that I used are highlighted in the stories, for example, you have a favourite line that you do not understand, you annotate and research it afterwards, then you reread it again.] - P8

The response from P8 highlights the importance of annotating and highlighting the text. By doing this, students can return to the text and read it, which can help them improve their comprehension and retention. Studies show that annotating and highlighting can help students identify concepts, organise ideas, and better understand the text (Zena et al., 2022).

Reading Practice. It refers to the habit of engaging in regular reading activities to improve students' comprehension and fluency. Some students deal with their difficulties by reading more texts and making it a habit. This is evident in the following response:

[First is reading comprehension, which needs to be practised to improve your reading comprehension.] - P7

[I deal with those difficulties through reading it, then I push myself to the limit, like I should read this, read it again and again, so that I can understand, and then it becomes a habit along the way because there are times that we feel lazy in reading, especially those longer texts.] - P8

[...so that you can solve that problem in reading literature, is that you should read more, read literary texts so that you can acquire new words, because if you have acquired new words, it would not be very difficult to read literary texts.] - P13

Reading literary texts involves more than just comprehension, making it challenging for students. Emphasizing the importance of regular reading, P8 recommends that students develop a habit of reading literary texts. P13 highlights that consistent practice can enhance comprehension, interpretation, and fluency, ultimately boosting students' confidence as they connect with the content.

Instructors also stress the importance of dedicating time to reading. Many students encounter difficulties with literary texts, and to address this, they must read more frequently and develop consistent reading habits. The findings reveal various strategies that students employ to overcome these challenges, including utilizing online resources and seeking peer support to enhance their understanding of the material.

Teachers should integrate digital tools and create collaborative learning activities to assist students. Additionally, students need to cultivate reading habits to improve their skills. While reading literary texts can be difficult, adopting effective strategies and teacher assessments can significantly aid students in navigating these challenges.

Benefits Obtained from Reading Literary Texts

This category discusses the benefits the participants obtain from reading literary texts, including Vocabulary Expansion, Improved Reading Comprehension, Enhanced Language Proficiency, Academic Application, Broadened Knowledge and Perspective, and Logical Reasoning Development.

Vocabulary Expansion. It is the process of acquiring new words and phrases to enhance reading comprehension and overall language proficiency, particularly when reading literary texts. Some students expanded their vocabulary upon reading literary texts. This is evident in the following responses:

[So the significant learning that I obtained in reading literary texts is that it broadened my vocabulary.] - P1

[It is a very big help, especially for us BSED English, because it improves our grammar and we can learn vocabulary that can help us and use it in the future.] - P2

[The benefits of it are for example, you have a shallow vocabulary that you know and if you read literary texts, you can gain new vocabulary, you will take note of it, you will read it, and you can learn from it afterwards, you can use it in your speech.] - P8

[...there are some things that I do not know, I can get it there, the words, it improves. If I do not know about the meaning, I search it to improve my vocabulary.] - P11

[You can acquire new words while reading literary texts, because you are also a curious person, so if you do not immediately notice, you will just forget about it when you encounter unfamiliar words, then you will be like, Oh, that is it, just skip it, you are not like that, and then you will leave it there once you search for it because you are like ahh, that is what this means, so it is like you will remember it right away.] - P13

The responses highlight the importance of expanding the vocabulary gained from reading literary texts. Reading literary texts exposes students to new words, which can expand their vocabulary and enhance their understanding of the language. P2 emphasises the expansion of vocabulary that future teachers can use. P8 indicates that new words or expanded vocabulary can be used in speech or speaking. Studies show that reading literary texts develops the students' vocabulary (Puspitasari, 2016).

Improved Reading Comprehension. It is the ability to effectively interpret and understand texts. It involves developing the skills needed to improve one's reading comprehension. Some students have improved their reading comprehension because of reading literary texts. This is evident in the following responses:

"There is improvement in my comprehension when it comes to reading." - P4

"...my reading skills and my reading comprehension, so those are some benefits." - P5

The responses of P4 and P5 underscore the importance of reading literary texts, as they have a significant impact on students' comprehension. As students engage in different kinds of literary texts, they encounter complex concepts, themes, and ideas, which can improve their comprehension (Waheed et al., 2021).

Enhanced Language Proficiency. It refers to the improved level of mastery in using language effectively, characterized by enhanced grammar, pronunciation, and overall language skills. By reading various literary texts, students have enhanced their language proficiency. This is evident in the following responses:

[It is a very big help, especially for us, BSED English, because it improves our grammar.] - P2

[...actually, if there is something that I have read, I will imitate the proper pronunciation of it.]
- P4

"...knowing the correct grammar, by saying some words correctly, or by saying sentences correctly." - P6

[...it enhances my pronunciation, for example, if I read, it enhances my pronunciation] - P11

[...it has a very big impact because I encountered words, new words, and at the same time the pronunciation that I thought was that but was not is corrected.] - P12

The responses underscore the significance of reading literary texts in enhancing students' language proficiency. P2 highlights that for future English teachers, reading improves grammar, aligning with research showing that exposure to various sentence structures boosts grammatical accuracy (Poorsoti & Asl, 2016). P4, P6, and P11 note that reading literary texts also enhances pronunciation, with P12 mentioning that it can correct mispronounced words. Instructors observe gradual improvements in students' English proficiency through literary reading. Although progress may be slow, students engage actively with the texts. Some prefer reading aloud, which helps them grasp pronunciation and discover unfamiliar words, illustrating how reading literary texts contributes to the enhancement of language skills.

Academic Application. It refers to the practical application of the skills learned in reading literary texts. When students acquire the skills and knowledge from reading literary texts, they apply these skills and knowledge in academic activities, such as writing. This is evident in the following response:

[...if I have read something, I can use it in academic activities, for example, making an essay, I can remember that I have read something related to it, and I can apply those in academics.] -
P4

P4 emphasizes the value of reading literary texts for academic activities, such as writing. These texts provide knowledge on various subjects, including history, culture, grammar, and sentence structures, which can enhance students' writing skills and support their arguments. This aligns with the study showing that reading literary texts can improve academic performance (Hicks, 2023).

Broadened Knowledge and Perspective refers to the expansion of understanding and insights into various subjects. Students who read literary texts encounter diverse ideas, concepts, and cultures that challenge their assumptions. This exposure helps broaden their knowledge and perspective. This is evident in the following responses:

[We can do research so that we can understand what the real point of the story is, to broaden our knowledge.] - P7

[It impacts me in a way that I have learned a lot of stories, literary texts, that can help me as an English student and as a future teacher to share those literary texts with my future students.] -
P9

"Through engaging literary text, it enhances my vocabulary, my perspective, and my knowledge of various literary pieces, which will help me to equip myself so that I can share it with my future students" - P13

[...there are morals or themes that are realistic. It is like you can gain something based on the material that is being read.] - P15

Reading literary texts broadens students' knowledge and perspective by exposing them to diverse cultures, traditions, and values. It encourages research into the concepts presented in the stories, enabling students to learn about various practices. Additionally, as noted by P9 and P13, reading literature equips students with literary knowledge that they can pass on to future generations. Engaging with these texts allows students to analyze literary devices, deepening their understanding. P15 highlights that they can also gain real-life values from their readings. Overall, literary texts offer a rich array of insights that help students appreciate how the world has evolved and relate their experiences to the stories they encounter.

Developed Logical Reasoning. It refers to the improved ability to think critically, analyse information, and make informed decisions. Reading literary texts can develop the students' logical reasoning. As students encounter complex ideas, concepts, and contexts, they can develop their logical reasoning as they analyse information from the literary texts they read. This is evident in the following responses:

[My critical thinking has been enhanced because literary pieces are really important, mostly because literary pieces are not easy to understand, and they still need interpretations. It is like my brain is being challenged, my thinking is being challenged, and I can think that there is something more to the meaning or theme.] - P12

[Maybe the impact is that it develops my reasoning, the way I defend, and my communication skills.] - P10

The responses underscore the significance of reading literary texts in developing students' logical reasoning and critical thinking skills. P12 notes that these texts challenge students' thoughts, while P10 highlights how they foster reasoning through questioning and argumentation. Additionally, engaging with literary texts enhances communication skills and vocabulary, which are beneficial for future academic and professional pursuits, such as teaching and other professions.

Reader response theory suggests that students enhance their reading comprehension by analyzing texts, thereby encountering diverse language structures and expanding their language proficiency. Literary texts expose students to various subjects, such as history and culture, broadening their knowledge and perspectives, which enhances their academic activities, including writing.

The findings suggest that reading literary texts can enhance career opportunities for students, particularly those in fields such as education, writing, and communication. By refining their reading comprehension, language proficiency, and critical thinking skills, students can effectively tackle complex concepts and articulate well-supported opinions. Ultimately, engaging with literary texts promotes academic success and personal growth by fostering empathy and cultural awareness through exposure to diverse contexts and values.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study examines the experiences of third-year BSED English students in reading literary texts, focusing on the challenges they encounter and the strategies they employ to overcome them. Findings indicate that students' performance is influenced by the difficulty of the texts, as well as their interests and motivation to read literary texts.

The study recognizes the students' several challenges in reading literary texts. However, it also highlights the strategies that students use to overcome their challenges. The study also revealed that reading literary texts offers several benefits that students can gain and use for academic success and personal development. These benefits underscore the importance of incorporating literary texts into the curriculum, providing students with a foundation in language skills, critical thinking, and cultural awareness.

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